



For Immediate Release
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**Floor Statement of Senator Max Baucus (D-Mont.)
Regarding the Confirmation of Kathleen Sebelius To Be Secretary of HHS**

Mr. President, the Senate confirmed the first member of President Obama's cabinet more than three months ago. Today, we are here to finish the job.

It has taken some time to get here. But now we have a great nominee to be Secretary of Health and Human Services.

Today, we will vote to confirm the nomination of Governor Kathleen Sebelius to be Secretary of HHS. She is the right person for the job.

Governor Sebelius comes to us with a long list of qualifications. She is a true public servant. For more than six years, she has served as Governor of Kansas. For eight years, she served as the Kansas Insurance Commissioner. And for eight years before that, she served in the Kansas State Legislature.

Governor Sebelius has devoted a career to serving the public. She understands the legislative process. She understands the administrative process. And she has experience working with the private sector, too. Governor Sebelius has earned the respect of Republicans and Democrats alike.

Governor Sebelius knows a lot about health care. She is committed to protecting people and getting them the health care that they need. As Governor, she worked hard to make sure that Kansans — especially kids — had access to quality health insurance that they could afford. And as Insurance Commissioner, Governor Sebelius blocked a merger that would have made insurance unaffordable.

In addition to protecting consumers, Governor Sebelius also recognizes the need to bring businesses together to make our health care system work.

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As Governor, she worked hard to make health care costs more manageable for businesses. And she worked to get more small businesses to offer health insurance coverage. Governor Sebelius doubled the small business tax credit.

Governor Sebelius' record shows that she approaches problems from all sides. She is prepared to try creative solutions. She is forward-thinking. She's willing to work with everyone. And she's not afraid to lead — even when faced with difficult choices and resistance to change. That's just the kind of leadership that we need in the Secretary of Health and Human Services.

Governor Sebelius has proven that she is willing to work hard. And it's a good thing — because we have a lot of work to do.

Our health care system is broken. We spend more than any other country on health care — more than \$2.4 trillion dollars annually — and we don't even cover all Americans.

Forty-six million Americans lack health insurance, and another 25 million Americans are underinsured — they have some coverage but not enough to keep their medical bills manageable. That's why medical debt contributes to half of all bankruptcies — affecting about two million people a year.

American families are struggling to keep up with the high costs of health care. And American businesses are straining to absorb these rising costs while trying to stay competitive at home and abroad.

The path that we are on is not sustainable. We must reform our health care system. And we must do it now. Failure to address problems in the health care system will undermine our efforts to restore the economy.

We need a health care system that meets all of our needs. A high-performing health care system would guarantee all Americans affordable, quality coverage no matter their age, health status, or medical history.

Health care reform will help to stabilize our economy. And it will make sure that we are prepared to handle our long-term fiscal challenges.

Congress has made a good start toward reform. But there's still a long way to go.

Last year, we started the process by holding 10 different health reform hearings. We learned about the problems in our current system and started to develop solutions.

In June, along with my Colleague Chuck Grassley, I hosted a day-long health care summit for the Finance Committee. We engaged our Colleagues in the process early on. And in November, I released a white paper — A Call to Action — that outlined my vision for health care reform.

Since then, I've been working closely with Senator Grassley and the Senators on the Finance Committee. And I've been working with Senator Kennedy and the HELP Committee to come up with meaningful, comprehensive health reform legislation that we can pass this year.

Last week, the Finance Committee held the first of three roundtables. We discussed delivery system reform. And tomorrow, we're walking through some policy options. In coming weeks, we'll have two more roundtables and walk-throughs.

Senators will weigh the options. They will contribute to the process.

By June, we'll be ready for a Finance Committee markup. We're working together. We're making good progress. But Congress cannot do this alone.

Congress needs a strong partner at HHS to pass comprehensive health reform. We're developing a framework that will change how health care is delivered. But we need a first-class Secretary and team at HHS to help get reform off the ground.

I look forward to working with Governor Sebelius to make sure that our bill can be implemented. I want to make sure that we send the Secretary a product that sets the rules of the game. And I want to make sure that we also give the Department and agencies the flexibility that they will need to play their part effectively.

It will be a long and iterative process. And I'm pleased that we'll be able to get started soon.

Governor Sebelius is the right person for the job. She has the political experience, determination, and bipartisan work ethic to get the job done. She's been an Insurance Commissioner. And she knows the nuts and bolts of the health care system. She's been a Governor, so she knows how to work with Democrats and Republicans.

I have no doubt that Governor Sebelius will continue to show her commitment to public service as Secretary of Health and Human Services. And the American people will benefit from her service.

Let us finish the job of confirming President Obama's cabinet. Let us place a fine public servant in office. And let us confirm Governor Kathleen Sebelius to be Secretary of HHS

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